S
368.41
W20mg
May 1997

Montana State Library
3 0864 1006 0180 9

state fund
guardian

MAY Spring 1997

STATE FUND EMPLOYEES LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

By Jean Ketchel

On May 2, forty-two State Fund employees attended a seminar on "Dealing with Upset Citizens and the Public." The seminar was conducted by Randy Bauer, a nationally recognized human relations expert. Bauer presented several techniques for dealing with upset customers.

The most important technique described by Bauer is to create a mental picture of an umbrella. When dealing with an angry customer, visualize yourself under the umbrella, out of the flow of their anger. It is important to remember you are deflecting the anger, not the person. This technique will enable you to remain calm and not take the customer's anger personally. According to Bauer, it takes at least 20 repetitions of this technique for it to become a habit, and he suggests keeping a picture of an umbrella by your desk.

Bauer recommends you let the customer vent, then deal with the issues. Restate the customer's concern. Keep your voice quiet, and use active listening (take notes, ask questions, etc.). Get as much information as possible. Use the customer's name, and have him or her sit down if possible. Always thank the customer for bringing the issue to your attention, and let him or her know that you want to help. Get others involved when necessary. Give your name, and be direct about how you intend to handle the situation. Bauer stressed that these techniques should only be used if you are sincere in your desire to help, or else the customer will perceive you as being sarcastic. Finally, never use the words "you" or "your" when delivering bad news, as those words are perceived as being aggressive.

After each experience, take some time to note which techniques worked for you, what mistakes you made, what you forgot to do, and what could have been done to prevent the situation in the first place.

KEEP UP THE GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE!

Comments from the 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey

"I would like to commend **Chip McKenna and Laurie Kuntz**. They have explained more than we ever knew was available before. Laurie has really stayed on top of one of our claims. We appreciate their hard work."

"I believe over the past several years the State Fund has done an excellent job of turning around an out of control, very expensive, fraud ridden organization. You are an example of what good people can do when they run a government program. I applaud your efforts."

SALARY SURVEY UPDATE

Salary survey results are in, and Human Resources is currently coming up with detailed scenarios based on performances and FY98 budget projections. The survey itself will not be published, however, after the June board meeting, a compensation program guide for FY98 and the FY98 merit matrix, as approved by the Board, will be distributed.

Published monthly for and by the employees of the Montana State Fund.

President's Message

As competition in the workers' compensation market has accelerated over the past few years, the State Fund is now turning its attention from forming a "new" competitive organization to being a viable and successful competitor. With this shift, my confidence in all of you remains exceedingly strong. You have contributed your creative ideas and solutions to the changes occurring within our organization. If there is one single element responsible for our success, it is our dedicated employees and the positive attitudes and strong values which permeate each department. Together we have made monumental strides to develop, enrich and deliver our products and services internally as well as to our diverse policyholder base.

Also noteworthy is your hard work to strengthen our organizational environment. As each day passes, our culture becomes stronger. From our customer focused claim adjusters who work daily with traumatic situations to our safety conscious loss control professionals who work to minimize our internal injuries, our positive values and attitudes are being ingrained in everything we do and our future is being patterned. My applause to an exceptional group of employees!

TAKE OUR DAUGHTERS TO WORK

By Dwan Ford

The Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee for Women sponsored "Take Our Daughters to Work" on April 24. Sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Women, the day is part of a national effort targeted at young teenage girls to help improve their self-esteem, lower drop out rates and promote training and education in a variety of occupations.

Sarah Whitehouse, a 7th grade student (a.k.a. my favorite niece), spend the morning with me. We kicked off the day with the opening ceremony at the Capitol, and listened to Governor Racicot's remarks. We then beat feet over to the State Fund where Sara was able to experience "a day in the life of an administrative assistant."

Dwan Ford teaches her niece, Sara, the finer points of her job.

As my "shadow," Sara visited several departments for an overview of our operations, she spent time on the computer and helped schedule and coordinate a meeting.

Thanks to ICCW and everyone who offered to participate in this importantannual event.

Kudos Kolumn

KUDOS TO CAROL MORRIS AND BOB SILBERLING

Karen and Steve Miser send kudos to Carol and Bob for all of their hard work in making Steve's retirement farewell a nice and wonderful event. It was greatly appreciated.

KUDOS TO THE MEDICAL PAY UNIT

Kris Brandt and Kathryn Kendall extends kudos to the Medical Pay Unit. They have worked Saturdays and extra hours to catch up after the BIS conversion. Thanks for the extra effort!

KUDOS TO SANDY ADAMS

Kris Brandt extends kudos and a thank you to Sandy Adams for working so hard to get caught up. Chip McKenna sends kudos to Sandy for the "Adams" maneuver.

KUDOS TO BOB SILBERLING

When Annette Satterly met with BSW Inc., they told her how impressed they were with the way Bob handled their claim.

KUDOS TO THE OLD FUND UNIT

Sam Heigh extends Kudos to her entire unit. Everyone has kept a positive attitude during this frustrating time and has been willing to help others. Sam gives a special thanks to Sandy Adams for her extra work.

KUDOS TO THE EAC

The Employee Advisory Committee gives a big kudo to the Employee Activity Committee. Thanks for all of your hard work organizing breakfasts and the other activities enjoyed by all of the employees at State Fund.

PROFILES HR

Back: Wes Winden, Joanne Shydian, Front: Debbie Allen, Debbie Svaldi

Debbie Allen has been the Human Resources Assistant nearly four months. She helps Wes post job vacancies and track applications. She is responsible for timesheets and assists with special projects.

Debbie's previous experience includes work as a paralegal and legal secretary. She is currently studying to receive an Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies.

In her spare time, Debbie enjoys outdoor activities and reading.

Wes Winden, Human Resources Specialist, has been at the State Fund two years. He is responsible for recruitment and selection of employees, the employee benefits program and the State Fund training program.

He is retired from the U.S. Army after 20 years of active duty as a personnel specialist. While in the service, he completed an Associate Degree in administration.

Wes has a son in the U.S. Air Force and a 17-year-old daughter. He enjoys music and skydiving.

Joanne Shydian has been the Vice President for Human Resources since September 1994. She oversees recruitment and selection, labor relations, compensation, employee relations, PPRP and training.

Previous work experience includes Director of the Office of Personnel and Training for the Department of Revenue, Manager of Classification and Compensation at MSU, Manager of Recruitment and Selection at MSU and Personnel Technician at UM.

She earned a Bachelor's Degree from UM and has completed post graduate work toward a Master's Degree at MSU.

Joanne has one son, age 12, and she enjoys racquetball, tennis, soccer, softball, skiing and sewing.

Debbie Svaldi has worked in Human Resources at State Fund for over 20 years. Her responsibilities include compensation, classification, policy interpretation, in-house claims coordinator and employee of the month program. She recently received certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources.

Debbie is married and in her spare time enjoys traveling, antiques and family activities.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Vi's co-workers say she provides excellent customer service with a smile. She has implemented a system to track calls and makes sure the response is timely. She has a great dedication to the State Fund and all of the employees here; even though her position can become a real "hot-seat" when things are not working. Vi handles the pressure with ease and is able to calm irate people. She helps her co-workers by learning new things so she can provide answers without passing the calls on to other staff.

Vi's abilities help all of State Fund to work better with less down time, and that means better service for State Fund customers.

ON YOUR MARK. . . GET SET . . . GO!

Ready or not, the Governor's Cup is only one week away. Break out those running shoes, strollers, water bottles and whatever else you need to get you in the mood for fun and exercise! Good luck to all the State Fund employees running individually and on teams.

REMINDER

Employee of the month nominations need to be submitted around the 15 of each month. Forms are available in the holder next to the confidential nomination box in the non-smoking break room, from the Human Resources Department or on-line in S: \shareprm\hrinfo\recognit.wpd.

Human Resources

Personnel changes as of April 18, 1997

NEW HIRES

Michael Blades, Claim
Brad Cozzie (Claim)
Ester Grant (Admin/Finance)
Joseph Harrilla (Claim)
Larry Nelson (LC/PA)

DEPARTURES

Claudia Thomas (Claim)
Steve Miser (Claim)
Wanda Person (Admin/Finance)
Marilyn Maphies (Underwriting)
Brett Ouellette (Claim)
Lynn Swanson (Claim)

NEW/LOST BUSINESS FOR MARCH

346 new policies were written in March for a total premium of $602,445. 442 policies were lost in March; total lost premium is $1,345,214.

Editor: Aidan Myhre
Managing Editor: Shannon Copps
Employee Reporters:
Kathy Rowsey Dwan Ford
Charlie Adams Jean Ketchel
Jay Phillips Monica Carson

Please call 444-6502 with comments or suggested articles.

This issue of the *Guardian* was printed and copied by Publications and Graphics, Department of Administration , Helena, MT. Printing and copying costs are available by writing State Fund, P.O. Box 4759, Helena, MT 59604-4759.

All rights reserved; reproduction is prohibited without permission.

UNCOVER CUSTOMERS' REAL NEEDS

When you take the time to ask customers questions to uncover their real needs, you can achieve remarkable results.

Get customers talking. Invite them to express their needs by asking open-ended questions.

Practice exceptional listening. Restate what customers have said in your own words. Customers will respond by correcting or modifying your statement, confirming or offering more information. Any one of these responses moves you to a richer understanding of what your customers want.

Uncover customers' motivations. Let customers vent their feelings. The information you gather will help you tailor your solutions to address the underlying issues. Always tie your recommendations to the benefits sought by your customers.

Using this questioning and listening approach helps you to clarify customers' expectations and develop effective solutions. Through this technique, you can assure your customers that you truly care about, and understand, their needs.

EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE

At the April EAC meeting, it was decided the committee would pass by-laws in the future. There was discussion on several items in the dress code, and when the issues are resolved, recommendations will be made to Carl. The EAC president will go to the executive staff meeting to make requests in person when a request needs Carl's approval.

The EAC needs to hear from every committee, every month. Representatives from each committee are encouraged to attend, if someone cannot attend, please contact Ed Benasky with a committee update.

GREAT COMPLIMENTS

Karen Longmire recently helped an out of state customer who expressed her gratitude and said, "every time I call the Montana State Fund, I receive the most courteous people." She also told Karen that she never receives treatment like that from Arizona. Marti Heaton also had a customer say, "I just want to tell you I enjoy calling State Fund because all you folks there are always in a good mood, cheerful and pleasant to work with."

Thanks to everyone for working hard to keep our customers happy!

JOIN IN THE EMPLOYEE ACTIVITIES

June 6: hot dogs, Polish sausage and chips during lunch.

June 19: ice cream during afternoon break.

July 1: breakfast items.

August 30: summer picnic at No Wake Lake

December 6: off-site Christmas party.

December 19: potluck luncheon.